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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20505

OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

21 March 1973

MEMORANDUM FOR: Brigadier General Brent Scowcroft
U.S. Air Force
The White House

SUBJECT : Your 21 March Request

1. Per your request levied this morning (21 March), attached are some notes and comments on current Vietnamese Communist behavior patterns which we have pulled together in the past few hours. These reflect the most recent information available to us in Washington.

2. Because of the time constraint of your deadline, I am giving you these notes in a rough draft form without taking the time for retyping them into a polished publication.

3. Two copies are appended, one for you and one for Dick Kennedy.

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Special Assistant for Vietnamese Affairs

Attachment

cc: Mr. Kennedy w/att

NSA Declassification/Release Instructions on File.

Viewed as a whole, North Vietnam's logistical and manpower pipeline continues to operate in much the fashion ^{that has been} ~~we would~~ ^{normal for} expect for this time of year. Large quantities of supplies are on the move through Southern Laos and in Cambodia and South Vietnam. Military manpower -- as many as 20,000 -- are in transit and there is no indication that any have been diverted or turned back.

At the top of the funnel in southern North Vietnam there has been a pronounced diminishment of supply movements -- again, entirely consistent with patterns of former years. There have been no regular infantry groups detected in several weeks and the recent emphasis has been -- and continues to be -- on the shuttling southward of civilian and ^{military} ~~quasi-~~ ^{specialists.} ~~civilian infiltrators.~~ This does represent a divergence from the patterns of former years, ^{but it is a divergence that began before the President's 15 March statement.} ^{determine whether}

On balance, we believe it is too early to ~~separate from~~ ^{our evidence these reflects} these signs ~~that~~ which might represent Hanoi's response to the terms of the cease fire (and the President's warning) ~~and that~~ ^{those} ~~or whether it represents the Communists'~~ which may be their routine pursuit of the logistical tasks which they feel are necessary to support their current strategic needs in South Vietnam and elsewhere. At the very least it must be concluded that Hanoi has not called a halt to any activity already in progress as of two-three weeks ago and, in fact, has undertaken some steps which are compatible with a normal continuation of their logistical procedures.

Logistic Developments

Recent Activity

Within the past few days there have been no hints of major changes in North Vietnam's logistic effort. Though a few days lag is usually required to make firm judgments about the pace of logistical activity, it is clear that transportation of supplies is continuing. The level of activity in various areas can be characterized briefly.

- In the central North Vietnam Panhandle, activity in the area surrounding Vinh has been at a considerably lower level since the cease-fire went into effect than it was through late January. That some supplies are currently continuing to move through the area is evidenced by still detected barge traffic traveling south. As recently as 16 March an element south of Vinh reported that nearly 200 tons of cargo had been offloaded from barges that day. In almost no instances have the final destination of nor the type of cargo being moved been delineated, and references to

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southbound ordnance deliveries have been few.

-- In the southern North Vietnam Panhandle, we currently estimate that very large stockpiles of supplies are in place. As much as 30,000 tons of ordnance may have moved through the Thanh Hoa/Vinh area during the period October through February, and currently some portion of this remains in the southern Panhandle. As recently as the last three days of February an intercepted message revealed that some 2,800 tons of supplies -- again all unidentified by type -- were moving to various logistic units in Quang Binh Province. Other messages from the same general area suggested that part of the deliveries comprised ordnance. Unfortunately, intelligence on activity in this area has been virtually non-existent since then, and we can only extrapolate an estimate of activity there from that in adjacent areas. Cargo is

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continuing to move both into Laos and South Vietnam from Quang Binh Province, so logistical activity there must be continuing.

-- In southern Laos we have much more current and complete intelligence which shows that substantial logistical activity is continuing. The North Vietnamese kicked off a new phase of their dry season transportation campaign on 15 March: its emphasis is on moving supplies already in southern Laos to their final destinations in South Vietnam. An extremely large quantity of supplies is known to have moved into Laos during the period 1 February to 9 March. Of those which were identified (again in NVA communications), almost 30% was ordnance. Following that surge, activity on the input corridors to Laos has dropped (though by no means stopped) and the emphasis shifted to moving those supplies already there to destinations further south. Since 19 March there has been evidence of heavy vehicle traffic

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through the Panhandle and into the tri-border area of South Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia. Some vehicles moving through the Panhandle are transporting petroleum but our judgment is that others are moving military supplies. The judgment is supported by other recent evidence from the tri-border area and western South Vietnam that ordnance is continuing to move, and by various directives by the North Vietnamese that they intend to continue providing ordnance and military equipment to their main forces in South Vietnam in case their "enemies rekindle the war".

-- In eastern Cambodia, the major Communist lines of communication -- both road and waterway -- are supporting sustained heavy traffic. Again, evidence on the composition of supplies being moved is sparse, however, secondary explosions when supplies have recently been struck by air attack suggest some ordnance is on the move. It is more clear that a substantial amount of rice is being moved from Cambodian sources

toward Laos and South Vietnam; the normal pattern when deliveries are made to Laos is for ordnance to be carried on the return trip. ~~We have no evidence that that normal pattern is currently being varied.~~

-- Impressive evidence of supply movements in South Vietnam -- especially ^{Military Region 1} ~~Quang Tri~~ ~~area~~ ~~vice~~ -- have been noted as recently as 20 March. On that day an element of Binh Tram 12 which operates around Quang Tri reported that at least 130 tons of ammunition were moved to unspecified destinations. It cannot be determined whether this movement was from stockpiles already in-country, or represented deliveries across the DMZ. During the first 14 days of March, COMINT reporting on vehicle activity suggested that up to 200 tons of supplies daily were being moved in Quang Tri. Farther south in MR 1 activity in the A Shau area has included ammunition deliveries of about 125 tons reported on 17 March. Three days later Binh Tram 41 in the Route 922 (Laos)/A Shau area reported that at least 27

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vehicles were apparently transporting supplies into South Vietnam. Supplies continue to move into the Central Highlands from southern Laos, and South Vietnamese sources estimate that the Communists are moving 35 to 40 tons of supplies daily into Binh Long and Tay Ninh Provinces. Aerial photography continues to reflect truck convoys moving there.

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Supplies on the Move in South Laos

The nature of the intelligence available to us this year precludes an accurate assessment of the quantity of supplies now on the move in southern Laos. However, we estimate the quantity to be large. ^{according to intercepted messages} For example, some 9,000 tons moved into southern Laos from 1 February to 9 March via the Ban Karai Pass alone. Input on other entry corridors could have increased that tonnage by an additional 50%. In addition, some large quantities moved into south Laos before February, and smaller amounts are still entering. The supplies have for the most part not been subjected to bombing, and we estimate that at least most of those input to south Laos since 1 February are still on the move through Laos and Cambodia toward South Vietnam. The newly initiated transportation phase will emphasize their movement to forward areas and is currently scheduled to last until at least 31 May. This relatively long duration of this phase may imply that even more supplies than those enumerated are to be moved.

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Post Cease-Fire Changes in the Logistic System

The North Vietnamese dry season transportation effort appears to be following the normal annual pattern. In general, there appear to be no substantial inconsistencies from what we would have expected to see if we had mapped a model dry season effort. The three phases in the effort so far -- one through North Vietnam, one through the input corridors, and now one through the Laos Panhandle -- are analagous to those of past years.

There have, however, been some minor, but possibly important, changes noted recently. For example, for the last week to ten days [REDACTED] monitoring supply activity on the input corridors to Laos have detected a northward bias to vehicle activity -- i.e. more vehicles headed north than south. Such a bias is certainly not unprecedented, however, and it may simply represent a return of some of the very large number of vehicles which entered Laos during the preceding month to North Vietnam. When back, they conceivably could pick up more cargo to move south. Alternatively, the reported northbound bias could be misleading if heavy southbound traffic is underway on other routes [REDACTED]. Thus, while we are not discounting the possible significance of a sustained

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northbound bias in vehicle detections in the input corridors, there is no other supporting evidence on which to base a judgment that this activity represents an important deviation from the norm.

Since the cease-fire to the present we have seen no substantial reorganization of the Communist logistical system in southern Laos, Cambodia, or northern South Vietnam. We would expect to see such changes if a major change in logistical plans or capabilities were anticipated. Since the cease-fire two major NVN logistical elements appear to have been disbanded as such, but this has not resulted in a degradation of logistical capabilities. Binh Tram 33, for example, which had been charged with overseeing logistical activity around Muong Nong ^(in Laos) was recently disbanded; however, all of its elements have now been resubordinated to other logistic units in the Panhandle and parts of Binh Tram 33's former area of responsibilities has been assumed by other units. In Quang Tri Province Binh Tram 28, which formerly operated around Khe Sanh has apparently, since the cease-fire, completed its transformation into an AAA Regiment. Its former area of logistical responsibilities has also been assumed by other units so

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that a continuity of logistical activity can be sustained. Finally back in southern Laos there is evidence since the cease-fire that some reorganization of the commo-liaison system (to move personnel) has been effected; however, this has not impaired NVA capability to move men, nor has it impinged on logistical capabilities in any way. There could, in fact, be fairly large reductions in the Communist logistical apparatus without impairing its effectiveness, now that the bombing has halted.

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Supplies that have entered South Vietnam since 23 January

On the question of how many supplies have entered South Vietnam since 23 January, we can make no firm estimate, but can offer some insights. Immediately after the cease-fire took effect, a special transportation effort was initiated to move supplies apparently from North Vietnam across the DMZ into South Vietnam. Its duration or successes was never revealed. More recently, in the first two weeks of March, evidence of very heavy vehicle activity offered a strong implication of continued resupply across the DMZ. From the vehicle movement data provided in COMINT, we estimate that up to 3,000 tons of supplies were handled by logistical units in northeastern Quang Tri Province during those two weeks. It is likely that they had recently crossed the DMZ.

Activity has also been heavy on Route 922 toward the A Shau Valley. For example, 19 March photography revealed that 50 vehicles were traveling on that route, although it was not clear whether they were en route or returning. A few days earlier COMINT revealed that 100 vehicle loads of cargo had recently been unloaded in the same area. Vehicle movements into the Central Highlands have been sustained since the cease-fire, though recent evidence on the numbers of vehicles moving has been less abundant. In early February, however, we estimated that up to 100

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tons of supplies daily were making the trip. In MR 3, heavy vehicle activity from the Cambodian border areas reveals continuing resupply and it is likely that the South Vietnamese intelligence reports of 35 to 40 tons daily moving in-country understates the total flow into MR 3. In MR 4 virtually no intelligence on quantities exists, however it is clear that supplies are continuing to move into ~~in-country~~ the delta area of South Vietnam (i.e., across the Cambodian border).